

Department of Nutrition

Undergraduate Honors Thesis Guidelines and Requirements

Why complete an Honors Thesis?

The honors thesis provides students with opportunities to engage in scholarship and professional activity that cannot be paralleled by any classroom experience. Preparing a thesis allows students to explore a topic thoroughly, generate new knowledge and contribute to their fields of study. The thesis can satisfy intellectual curiosity, promote creativity and intellectual maturation, and expose students to expectations similar to those in graduate school, professional school and various career positions. The thesis encourages students to develop several important academic and professional skills, such as critical analysis, oral and written communication, problem solving, and time management. The thesis also affords students the opportunity to develop a professional working relationship with their professors which can help to enrich their intellectual development. The thesis improves student marketability by providing students with advanced academic experience, detailed meaningful reference letters from their mentors, and tangible products to show admissions committees and prospective employers. Students who successfully complete an Honors thesis and maintain a minimum 3.5 GPA and are in good standing are eligible to graduate from the Department of Nutrition with distinction.

Eligible students

Junior or senior honors students are eligible. Non-nutrition majors are eligible. Non-honors students who meet the Honors College requirements (i.e., minimum 3.3 GPA and in good standing) are also eligible. Students who do not meet these requirements may submit a petition to the Undergraduate Program Director to waive the requirements. This petition should include a letter of recommendation from the prospective mentor.

Eligible mentors

Any permanent, full-time faculty member who holds a primary or joint appointment in the Department of Nutrition may supervise an honors thesis.

The product

The honors thesis will be approximately 20 double-spaced pages with 1 inch margins; not including references (exact length may vary). The thesis must have a title page with spaces for the signatures of the thesis advisor, the Honors College Dean, and the date. Complete formatting guidelines are found in Appendix I.

Model 1: An empirical project

In this option, students collect or analyze original data to address a research question. The written product includes an Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Results (including figures and legends), Discussion, and Reference Section. The amount of time devoted to the data collection, analysis, and writing is more substantial than that expected in a 1-semester class. The mentor determines whether a research proposal is necessary and evaluates the proposal if submitted.

Model 2: A literature review

In this option, students write a critical analysis of published empirical literature on a particular topic in a nutrition-related field. This review summarizes a body of information and provides an original synthesis that organizes the information in a novel way (e.g., a new interpretation of the findings, a timeline of the progression of knowledge, new emerging themes). The goal is for the writer to demonstrate comprehensive sophisticated knowledge of the current literature on a topic.

Model 3: Alternative project*

A student may propose an alternative final product, subject to approval by the thesis mentor and the director of the undergraduate program in the Department of Nutrition. If an alternative product is agreed

upon, the thesis mentor and additional reader(s) (a faculty member or professional in the area of study) identified by the mentor must create an evaluation rubric prior to the student beginning work on the alternative project. *A substantial written component must accompany any alternative final product.

For all models: An oral presentation must accompany the written thesis. The oral presentation can be in the format of a poster or PowerPoint presentation. The oral presentation should summarize the written thesis. Length of presentation should be determined with guidance from the mentor. There should be a question and answer period following the oral presentations. Oral presentations will be open to any faculty member or student to attend. The mentor and additional reader(s) must be present for the oral presentation.

Timeline

Students may apprentice with their mentor for at least 1 semester prior to considering work toward a thesis. The empirical thesis project usually takes 2-4 semesters to complete and the literature review 2-6 months. The duration depends on many factors, such as the amount of time needed to 1) read the relevant literature, 2) develop a research question or literature review topic, 3) obtain approvals, if needed, from the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC, for research involving non-human animals) or Institutional Review Board (IRB, for research involving human participants), 4) become proficient with necessary research skills, 5) conduct the research and analyze results, and 6) write the thesis.

Students are expected to meet regularly with their faculty mentor (at least twice per month, preferably more often) to set goals and deadlines, discuss progress and provide feedback.

Evaluation

The thesis will be evaluated by the research mentor and an additional 1-2 readers selected by the mentor. The additional 1-2 readers may be a faculty member in any department or a professional in the area of study. The mentor will work with the additional reader(s) to set deadlines for the submission of the thesis to the additional reader(s) and for the additional reader(s) to submit the evaluation to the mentor. Both the mentor and reader(s) will use the following checklist to evaluate the thesis (both written and oral components). The mentor and additional reader(s) will consult with each other to determine the final grade, and the undergraduate program director will determine the final grade in cases where the mentor and additional reader(s) cannot agree.

Please provide a rating of A=Excellent, B=Good, C=Satisfactory, D=Unsatisfactory and F=Poor for the following:

Skill	Rating	Comment
Demonstrated an understanding of scientific literature.		
Critiqued and analyzed the work of others in a scientific context		
Demonstrated an understanding of scientific terminology		
Used concepts in nutrition to describe, explain, and evaluate phenomena and to generate new ideas		
Demonstrated understanding of the scientific method		
Communicated effectively in written form		

Communicated effectively in oral form		
Demonstrated understanding of results and their interpretation (applies to empirical theses only)		
The thesis was free of typos and grammatical errors		

Recommended grade (using an A-F; +/- grading scale) : _____

Students must earn a grade of B- or better in HON 4880 (Honors Thesis II) to count towards their degree and to have successfully completed their thesis.

Coursework and deadlines

Students are required to enroll in 1-6 credit hours of HON 4880 the semester they intend to complete their thesis. Students may elect to enroll in 1-6 credit hours of HON 4870 (Honors Thesis I) during the semesters prior to that, if they are actively engaged in thesis activities. The exact number of credit hours and whether to enroll in 4870 depends on variables such as the amount of room in the student's schedule, financial constraints, and/or mentor requirements.

If students enroll in HON 4870, the thesis mentor will assign the student a grade for HON 4870. The mentor will discuss with the student what types of tasks/assignments will count for the student's grade. Examples are an annotated bibliography, critical analysis of readings (written as well as oral), laboratory reports, test designs, models, quizzes, an outline of the thesis, and so forth. Evaluation of these items should be arranged so that students know their progress throughout the semester. At the end of this semester, the faculty mentor will determine whether the student's progress is sufficient to warrant a continuation of study beyond this first phase. The mentor will discuss this with the student and report the decision to the Honors College office no later than 1 week before the end of classes.

Students must notify the Honors College of their intent to conduct an honors thesis by completing the online Intent to Conduct a Thesis Form, which requires that students 1) identify the faculty member who has agreed to supervise their project, 2) write a 200-word summary of their project, and 3) provide a tentative title for their project. If a student needs to register for 4870 or 4880, then this form is due **April 1** for summer registration, **August 1** for fall registration, and **December 1** for spring registration. Students who do not need to register should submit this form as soon as they begin the thesis. *NOTE: Students MUST register for 1-6 credit hours of HON 4880 the semester that they intend to complete their thesis.

Students must submit the Honors Thesis Presentation Announcement Form (Appendix II) to the undergraduate program director **at least two weeks before the Honors Thesis presentation.**

Students who receive a passing grade must notify the Honors College that they have successfully completed their honors thesis by completing the Certification of Successful Completion Form. This form is due by **the last day of final exams during the semester in which the thesis is completed.**

Required attendance at Honors Thesis Sessions

Students are required to attend three 2-hr sessions led by the Honors College Thesis Team each semester that they are working on their honors thesis. The three sessions are held at the beginning, middle and end of the semester. At the beginning of the semester, the Honors College will email students enrolled in 4870/4880 (and those not enrolled but have submitted an intent to conduct a thesis

form) the dates and times of the three sessions. The last session is the Thesis Pitch, which is an oral competition event where students have 3 minutes to communicate the importance of their research. Presenting at the Thesis Pitch is voluntary, but attendance is required.

Honors College support

Honors College students participating in Honors Thesis are eligible to borrow a laptop computer from the Honors College for the semester, contingent on availability. These students may also apply for financial support to present at conferences and purchase supplies for their research. In addition, there are several workshops held in the Honors College each semester to provide support to Honors College students engaged in research and theses activities. The Faculty Associate for Research and Theses and the Research Program Coordinator are available to advise students and their mentors.

Questions

Contact the Department of Nutrition's Undergraduate Program Director, the Honors College Undergraduate Research Program Coordinator, and/ or the Office of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships Director.

This page was last edited on 11/10/2020

Appendix I

HONORS THESIS FORMATTING GUIDELINES

1. General Formatting Requirements

- a. **Page size:** 8.5 x 11 inches.
- b. **Page margins:** 1 inch throughout the document, and no content should extend into any of the margins.
- c. **Font:** Arial or Courier 11-point or Times New Roman 12-point font must be used for the body of the thesis, including section subheadings. A different font may be used in the Appendices, if necessary.
- d. **Line spacing:** double
- e. **Justification:** paragraphs should be fully justified
- f. **Section headings:** all capital letters, up to 14 point and boldface, centered at the top margin of a new page.
- g. **Chapter heading and numbering:** all uppercase with Arabic numbers i.e. 1, 2, 3, etc.
- h. **Section subheadings:** must be consistent across chapters and formatted differently from all other levels (by alignment, capitalization scheme, font face, and/or underscore). Capital letters should not be used.
- i. **Page Numbering:** must be bottom-center, 0.75 inches from the bottom edge of the page.
 - Title page to Abstract - Lower case Roman numerals (ii, iii, iv, etc. – the title page are counted but not numbered).
 - The first page of your introduction or first chapter will begin with an Arabic numeral 1. Your subsequent text will then be assigned consecutive Arabic numerals (2, 3, 4...).
- j. **Tables and figures:** must appear have a single-spaced heading or caption. Table headings are placed above the table and captions for figures are placed below the figure. They should be embedded in the text with no excessive blank space above or below them.
- k. **Bibliography entries:** single spaced with double-space between entries.
- l. **Appendix:** headings should be lettered – APPENDIX A, APPENDIX B, etc.

m. **White space:** do not leave more than 1 inch of vertical white space in a page, unless to avoid widows and orphans, or a subheading is moved to the next page because no more than one line of text fits under it, or it is the last page of a chapter, or table/figure occupies most of the page.

n. **Signatures:** All original signatures **must** be made in **blue ink**.

2. Organization for Model 1: An Empirical Project

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COMMITTEE PAGE

DEDICATION (not required)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (not required)

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DEDICATION (not required)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (not required)

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Honors Thesis Announcement

From:	Undergraduate Program Director
Cc:	Department Chair Honors Thesis Advisor

RE: Honors Thesis Presentation Date

Student Name:	Date: (i.e. January 23, 2012)	Time: (AM/PM)
Location:	Room#:	Honors Thesis Advisor:
Honors Thesis Title:		
Abstract:		

Signature Department Chair:	Signature Undergraduate Program Director:
Signature Honors Thesis Advisor:	